4: Cross L-5 (no date) 1948 E16 Slavs E16

brilliance." The Slavic sun god was also known as Dazhbog, the god which gives life and fertility, but neither appellation, curiously enough, appears among the Southern Slavs. Dazhbog is occasionally called the son of Svarog, the god of fire.

A more general Slavic deity was Veles or Volos. In the Russian *Primary Chronicle* he is characterized as "the god of cattle," but this qualification has no relation to the original attributes of Veles. It results rather from the monkish chronicler's identification of the specifically Russian form of his name (Volos) with that of Saint Blasius, a Cappadocian bishop who died a martyr's death about 315 A.D., and was extensively revered thereafter as a patron of flocks and herds. In the *Primary Chronicle,* where Perun and Veles are mentioned together as gods by whom the Scandinavian Varangians and the Slavs of Kiev swore, the implication is that the Varangians swore by Perun (here the equivalent of Thor) and the Slavs by Veles, who thus may be viewed as the guardian of oaths, a sort of *Zeus epiorkios.* The name Veles itself is cognate with various Lithuanian words meaning "corpse," "ghost," and "devil," so that Veles is rather to be considered as a god of the dead, a conclusion justified by his frequent invocation in various late Bohemian curses.

Idols were used by the Eastern Slavs, and the medieval German chroniclers describe sanctuaries which the Baltic Slavs erected to their gods. Of these the most celebrated was that at Arkona, on the island of Rugen, dedicated to the god Svantovit, whose statue adorned it. Svantovit seems merely a local variant of Svarog, the sun god, and various other local deities of the same type are mentioned in medieval non-Slavic sources. If the Slavs did honor a supreme deity, it is reasonably clear that he was a thunder or a sun god like Perun or Svarog, who would thus reflect the more or less general Indo-European belief in such a deity who appears as Zeus, Jupiter, or the old Germanic Tiuz. Only among the Baltic Slavs is the existence of a special caste of priests attested.

A final and equally interesting problem connected with the

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to attention. If he is well brought up in this respect the Orthodox worshipper will stand erect with his feet together, his hands by his side, with head up and eyes looking straight before him to the east end of the church. His bodily posture expresses, and perhaps contributes to, the active share he is taking in what is going on. Ideally he is rendering praise and glory to God for all that He is and does, and at the same time he is presenting himself before God and submitting himself to the divine scrutiny.

At the time of Communion, the celebrant and other officiating clergy make their communion in both kinds, separately, as in the West. The priest and deacon then come out through the Royal doors and stand just outside them. The priest holds the chalice, into which the consecrated breads have been put. Lay communicants then approach and are given their communion standing, in both kinds, but administered together by means of a spoon placed between the communicant's lips. He then wipes his lips on a silk napkin which hangs over the deacon's arm, takes a sip of water and a small piece of bread (not, of course, consecrated) from a table standing near and returns to the body of the church.

The words of administration are "The servant of God, N——, receives the precious and holy Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, unto remission of sins and unto everlasting life", (to children "unto everlasting life" only).

At the end of the service all present go up to the Royal gates and in turn kiss a cross held out to them by the priest: and small pieces of bread which have been blessed are distributed and eaten.

The Orthodox rite is, generally speaking, a good deal longer than the Western, though not so much so as appears from the printed page. For at certain times the priest's part and the deacon's are going on simultaneously—the deacon being outside the iconostas and leading the devotions of the people in a Litany, while the priest is saying the prayers allotted to him within the Sanctuary. Still, Orthodox services are sometimes of great length, the Russians in particular having long been notorious in this respect, though modern times have brought some concessions to human frailty. "God grant us His special

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CHAPTER IX

THE ICONS

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ALLUSION has been made more than once in this book to the icons; but such is their importance in Orthodox piety that it may be well to devote a short chapter to them.

An icon is a picture of a sacred subject painted upon a panel of wood of varying size. The surface is prepared with a mixture of powdered alabaster and glue beneath which linen is sometimes stretched, and the colours laid on with the yolk of egg as a medium.[1] The finished panel was in many cases furnished later on with a covering of metal, precious or base, which completely hides the painting, except the flesh parts, to reveal which holes were cut in the metal. The rest of the picture, or at least its main lines, are reproduced in the metal cover by *répoussée*. Further embellishment may be added, in the form of haloes and different kinds of pendants. The icon may be adorned with precious stones, some famous examples being encrusted with a wealth of them.

It has been generally accepted that the icon is derived from the funerary portraits of the dead which were placed upon mummies in Egypt.[2] Perhaps by way of usage in connection with the martyrs, and devotion to their shrines, the use of icons spread in time throughout the Orthodox world and became a characteristic feature of Orthodox piety.

The painting of icons was a work of religion as well as a work of art, the painter preparing himself for his task by prayer and other spiritual exercises. In modern times the provision of vast numbers of cheap icons may have degener-

[1] For details in the technique of icon-painting see Minns-Kondakov: *The Russian Icon*, Oxford, 1927.

[2] See, however, A. Frolow: *Revue des Études Byzantines*, Tome VI, 1948, p. 125.

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ated into a mere trade, but ideally, and to a large extent in actual fact, the production of them has been and still is the pious activity of monks. The monasteries were the great workshops in which icons were produced, and although icons are nearly always anonymous, the known painters of these highly venerated objects were themselves greatly revered.

The subjects depicted on the icon are many and various. It may be a single figure; of Christ, the Virgin Mary, St. John the Baptist (winged, as the Precursor), or some other saint. It may be a group of figures, a picture of a scriptural or ecclesiastical incident, or the representation of an abstruse theological idea. Miracles, Martyrdoms, Councils of the Church, are drawn by the icon-painter's brush. An icon may even represent the veneration of another icon by some eminent prelate.

The icon-painter did not profess, with possibly some very rare exceptions, to be making a portrait, though the general aspect of a saint will be the same on every icon of him. Nor, in the great days of icon-painting, was realistic truth to nature conceived as an aim. The painter did not produce the illusion of depth, perspective was often reversed, and the niceties of anatomical knowledge ignored. Realism came in with the decadence of the art of icon-painting.

The men who made the icons in the great days of Byzantium and at the zenith of Russian icon-painting in fifteenth-century Novgorod were doing two things. They were decorating a flat surface and they were seeking to convey in line and colour an aspect of divine truth. At their best they achieved both those purposes supremely well.

They painted within the framework of rules about the way that this or that person should be represented, which belonged to the very core of the tradition of icon-painting. Such rules, often concerned with a surprising degree of detail, were embodied in manuals of instruction which circulated among the workshops.

Hence the immediate impression that the numberless icons of any particular subject are "all alike". But it is possible to exaggerate this similarity and to over-rate the influence of the manuals. The great examples of icon-painting reveal

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the fact that the rules left room for the expression of individual inspiration and the exercise of creative power, as the painter set about his task of adorning a given surface with a vision of divine truth.

As the icons vary in their subject matter, so they vary also in their artistic merit. Some are supreme works of art, many are of great beauty, superb in their composition, rhythm of line and glowing colour. Many others have little aesthetic value, and the icon may even degenerate into a cheap oleograph stuck on a piece of wood.

But the veneration in which they are held is independent of these considerations. Some measure of it may be found in the ubiquity of icons in an Orthodox country. They are not only in churches, but also in public buildings of all kinds, in private houses and shops. There is a recognized position for the icon in a room, and the visitor will salute it on entering, just as he greets his host. Schools, regiments, clubs and the like will adopt their own icons. The devout will carry an icon with them when they travel, and have it before them when they say their prayers. Well-to-do people may accumulate their family icons from generation to generation. The first thing the Orthodox worshipper does on entering his church is to salute the icons, or, at least, such of them as may claim his particular devotion. He bows before them, crosses himself, says a prayer, kisses the icon, and perhaps sets a lighted candle before it in the stand provided for the purpose. He then moves away to wherever he wishes to stand for the service if there is one, or to leave the church and go about his business.

Plainly we are here in a realm which readily lends itself to capture by popular religion. Popular religion, whatever the field in which it expresses itself, the use of the Bible, the singing of subjective and emotional hymns, the veneration of icons, or anything else, may easily use the thing it has captured, in a way which others call superstition, and which may indeed be such.

But before the Westerner draws hasty general conclusions about the Orthodox practice before the icons, he should reflect that the Orthodox approaches the icon with premises in his mind which he himself probably does not share.

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It is not a simple matter for a Westerner to grasp what the icon means to the Orthodox and the part it plays in his religious life. Perhaps it can be fully understood only from within Orthodoxy as part of Orthodox experience. But certain distinctions can be drawn. All Christians presumably agree that a picture of a sacred person or event has value and legitimate use as a means of teaching. But the icon is more than that. It is more also than a picture of a loved person, by looking upon which memory is refreshed and devotion stimulated. Neither of these parallels would account for the degree of veneration which is paid to the icons. It is the same veneration as the Orthodox pay to the Book of the Gospels and the Cross. On the other hand it is a lower degree of veneration than that which is given to the consecrated elements of the Eucharist. In the latter case worship is rendered to Christ Himself actually present. In an icon of Christ, He is not conceived as present in the same way as that. Yet there is a link between the actual material icon, and the person it represents. In the devout contemplation of an icon one is brought in some sense into the presence of the original of which it is a painting. The link is in the Orthodox view analogous to the connection between a sacred relic and the saint from which the relic is derived. With this difference, that the connection between the relic and the saint, assuming it to exist in fact, might be called a natural link, whereas the connection between the icon and its original is created by the Church. It is established by the action of blessing the icon. An icon is not, so to speak, fully an icon until it has been blessed. Then it becomes a link between the human and the divine, through it the other world comes into touch with the worshipper.

Standing before it with the right disposition of heart and mind, one is really in touch with, in the presence of, the subject which the icon represents. "According to Orthodox belief an icon is a place of the Gracious Presence. It is the place of an *appearance* of Christ, of the Virgin, of the saints, of all those represented by the icon, and hence it serves as a place for prayer to them." "By the blessing of the icon of Christ, a mystical meeting of the faithful and Christ is made possible."[1]

[1] S. Bulgakov: *The Orthodox Church*, p. 162 f., London, 1935.

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778 781 No wonder then that the icons are so highly revered, that famous icons are carried in procession through the streets, or brought by the clergy to the bedside of the sick.

778 789 So potent is the link between the icon and its prototype that many icons are regarded as "wonder-working icons" In fact the wonder-working icon is the icon *par excellence*. The belief that such icons are endowed with miraculous power has given rise to numberless legends.[1] They may tell of an icon's being the means of curing sickness and other ills which flesh is heir to, of bringing material good fortune to the devout believer, of securing the icon's own safety when menaced by danger, of rewarding its veneration and even resenting and punishing insult, physical injury and neglect, but mercifully restoring the sinner after his repentance. Not all of this is official Orthodox teaching: much of it belongs to the sphere of popular religion, where it may go to fantastic lengths.[2]

Presumably the orthodox interpretation of such happenings is that at the intercession of the saint depicted on the icon, God grants the request of the petitioner who prayed before it. In the popular mind such an explanation may readily slide into the conception that the saint is the benefactor because this particular picture of him was venerated, and that again may easily slip into the feeling that it is the actual icon itself which has worked the miracle or conferred the blessing.

There exist a relatively large number of pictures of the Blessed Virgin which tradition attributes to St. Luke, and these are treated with deep reverence. But a place of their own in the heart of the Orthodox believer belongs to the "Icons not made with Hands". These are icons the originals of which are believed to have come into existence without human agency. Such are the Vernicle, the legend of which is well known in the West also; and an image of Christ imprinted upon a cloth sent to Abgar, King of Edessa, by Christ himself and subsequently brought to Constantinople. This is the most ancient of the "Icons not made with Hands". But there are others, and they, and the copies made of them (though some are said

[1] See R. M. Dawkins for many such connected with the icons of Athos, in *The Monks of Athos*, London, 1936.
[2] Charles Diehl in *Cambridge Mediæval History*, Vol. IV, p. 6.

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to be impossible to copy, or even to photograph) are regarded with the deepest veneration.[1]

The canonical authority upon which the veneration of icons rests is the decree of the second council of Nicaea which is the seventh Ecumenical Council (see p. 54). The doctrinal basis is found in the fact of the Incarnation. God cannot be represented in His eternal being.[2] But God became man and took a body of material flesh. Because of this a picture may lawfully be made of Him. Further, in assuming a human body He used matter as the vehicle of spirit, rescued it from corruption and consecrated it to a share in His redemptive purpose. What is true of Christ's material body, is true of other forms of matter such as the material elements in the sacraments, and, in some measure, of the icons. The icons are, therefore, worthy of veneration, though in theory the degree of veneration is strictly limited.

[1] R. M. Dawkins has a chapter on "Icons not made with Hands"—in his *Monks of Athos*, Chapter 18.

[2] Yet icons exist which depict the Holy Trinity as two throned Figures side by side, with the Dove above them.

5: Kemp E-4, 5 (1926-1933)1935
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Slavic Peoples E16

appear that, for longer prayers, the priests and others who recited them relied on their books. The early recording of these forms partly accounts for their universal similarity. Doubtless, the sporadic work of copying began in the Balkans. The majority of early Russian and South Slav material of this order has a uniform character, not to be found in other departments of either folk-lore or popular literature. Still more significant is the fact that exorcismal forms and the magical prescriptions which are first found associated with Orthodoxy, are not unknown in Catholic countries. As regards magical spells, these are remarkably uniform. In the Balkans, the oriental origins of the well-known legend formulae are re-emphasised by direct contact at a later date with Mohammedan culture. The gap between the Byzantine or Christianised prototype of the charm and the popular version might be explicable on these grounds.

III

The Orthodoxy of the Slavs gave early signs of extreme asceticism. In any case Christian culture, as such, offered no new material basis of healing, but would have provided only approved forms of the visitation of the sick, the consolation of prayer and sacrament.[1] Whatever the pre-Christian system was, it was officially classed as heathen survival, and it never dissociated itself entirely from its primitive conceptions.

To summarise the results of research, the seers and priests of antiquity used strong-smelling herbs for internal and external use; the bodies and products of animals, birds, reptiles and fishes; drugs and concoctions to induce sleep, intoxication or abortion, stimulants and poisons. The uses of certain minerals, and particularly of certain magical stones and a few pigments, were certainly known. To these were added

[1] The functions of the Orthodox priest as healer and exorciser, the use of holy water and oil, the laying-on of crosses, relics and books, etc., are epitomised in a note in Goar's *Euchologion*, p. 750.

5: Kemp E-4, 5 (1926-1933)1935
EF6 Serbs EF6
Slovic Peoples E16

the sacra of the cult, especially the products of sacrificial offering, and, as to-day, a number of those material objects which, in the reverence of the simple person towards all that serves him, acquires a force and quasi-sacred symbolism. All things and organisms are treated with respect, and it is not so much that certain of them are picked out for veneration or as the objects of cult-worship, as that the common outlook on dynamic nature gives an individual character and hence a recognised function to each species.

The veneration of the oak tree does not save it from fire; that of the cherry tree makes it a sin to burn its wood or even to cut its branches: the yew is powerful, and may not be burned, but it can be hewn and carved and made into useful objects, dishes, handles, ploughs, boxes, spindles, trays, as well as crosses and amulets, which are then particularly safe or lucky. The blackthorn is used for magical purposes, such as impaling a vampire; it is recommended to use it in making wooden implements for the sake of its magical properties, but the tree itself can be regarded almost with dread, and may not be injured or cut down or uprooted. Nearly everywhere the grafting of fruit-tree slips on wild trees, particularly on wild pears and cherries, is thought to be a virtuous act, amounting to a form of charity. I have heard of a peasant doing so as an act of expiation, a desire to obtain merit (*zadužbina*), in a district which knows little nowadays of particular tree cults. Where a ritual-agricultural calendar is followed in the traditional manner, all grafting is reserved for special days, sometimes with a special local etiology. Individuals sometimes mark the birth of a child or an animal by fertilising a tree in this way.[1] Further, I have seen over and over again in remote and isolated places, that a wild tree has been ennobled, apparently for no sound economic purpose. While I know that almost a sentimental element is

[1] At Rakljansko Polje a pine tree was said to have sprung from a branch stuck in the ground by the Empress Milica when Car Lazar was born. Cf. J. Pančić, *Iz Prirode*, p. 52. Similar acts of commemoration are, of course, well known in other parts of the world.

5: Kemp E-4, 5 (1926-1933)1935
EF6 Serbs EF6
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Slavic Peoples E16

present in these practices, I would also ask whether there were not some more tangible cult significance underlying this giving of new vitality to trees. But this possibility and, for the matter of that, this aspect of agricultural activity as a whole, does not seem to have found a commentator, and I myself have not yet sufficient instances to formulate a theory.

The respect for things in general is innate in the peasant, as countless small observances in everyday life show. So long as this recognition persists, any object, however mean and common, can on occasion serve in magic, without being sacred; while if on the basis of special 'taboos' a list of sacred plants and animals were made, it would be far too large to allow of so many special cults or cult usages. Much less extensive would be a corresponding list of cursed things, which cannot under any circumstances be touched.

It must be remembered that the inventory of a peasant household (of the kind still out of touch with urbanism) is not large, while in the mountains or in the hinterland of Dalmatia it may not include all the primary necessities even of a very simple life. In this simpler scheme domestic artifacts and utensils retain something of their primitive significance. In extreme cases domestic tidiness is a minor ritual; every object has its proper place when not in use, and is carefully handled, and put away in a special position, which must not be reversed. The broom, the sieve, the kneading trough, the scoop, the chains of the hearth pot, the gourd, etc., have had their ritual associations amongst every people.

It is not possible to disentangle knowledge of the physical properties of substances from their significance in legend or worship; and it would be equally impossible to trace whether an object, used in divination, or a household utensil, which seems to enjoy special respect, such as a sieve or a wood-block or an axe, has a certain power ascribed to it directly, or through an analogous association with some other category of ideas.

The steam bath is noticed early for East and Northern Slavs, but it is curious that after the Slav invasion, the